LD2101
H.241 A3
1898

LD2101
H.241 A3
1898

Hon. E. Walden
With the compliments of the Author.

LD 2101
.H241 A3
1848

DR. FOOTE'S ADDRESS,

ON

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

BEFORE THE

LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF

HAMILTON COLLEGE.

LD2101
.H241A3
1848

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF

HAMILTON COLLEGE,

JULY 24, 1848.

BY THOMAS M. FOOTE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BUFFALO:
STEAM PRESS OF JEWETT, THOMAS & CO
Commercial Advertiser Buildings.

1848.

LD2101
.H241A3
1848

By exchange
APR 18 1929
Army and Navy Club
Washington D. C.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Hamilton College, September 28th, 1848.

Thomas M. Foote, M. D.

Sir:—The Phœnix and Union Societies of Hamilton College return you their thanks for the instructive, and entertaining Address, which you pronounced before them at their last Anniversary, and request a a copy for publication.

Very respectfully,

J. M. WOODWORTH,
A. M. STOW,
W. LEWIS,
} *Committee.*

Buffalo, October 10, 1848.

Gentlemen:—I have been prevented from giving an earlier reply to your note of the 28th ult., requesting, for publication, a copy of my address before the Literary Societies of Hamilton College, at their last Anniversary. It was written in a few hours, in intervals snatched from the laborious care of a daily paper, and I fear its appearance in print will do no credit to my cherished *Alma Mater*, and the kind friends I have ever found within her walls; but, such as it, it is at your disposal.

Very truly yours,

THOS. M. FOOTE.

Messrs. J. M. Wodworoth,
A. M. Stow,
W. Lewis,
} *Committee.*

ADDRESS.

That the proper study of mankind is man, has become an axiom. It is the most universal of all studies. The unlettered savage pursues it with as keen an interest as the scientific sage, or the accomplished man of the world, and oftentimes with more thorough appreciation of his subject. All confess the value of the knowledge so acquired, yet while it is so generally sought respecting individuals with whom we are brought into various degrees of personal relationship, comparatively few have made the grand characteristic traits which distinguish nations or races of people, objects of thought or investigation. It is true, that the men with whom we necessarily have daily associations of business or pleasure, may have a more immediate and decided influence on our affairs, than any of the nations of the old world, for instance; and a knowledge of the intellectual and moral organization of our acquaintances and friends, therefore, may be deemed of more importance to us than any information, however minute and exact, respecting people beyond the sea with whom we may never have converse. But in the present stage of civilization, nations no more

than individuals can live alone, churlishly refusing to conform to the usages of organized society. Social, political and commercial intercourse is cultivated by and enforced upon all. The people of Great Britain, who do not have the reputation of being particularly easy in their manners, or apt to make advances towards strangers, through their government insisted, at the cannon's mouth, that China should make herself neighborly and civil; and following the example thus set, though with gentler means, our own government has successfully undertaken to cultivate a more friendly and intimate intercourse, than formerly, with the people and government of the Celestial Empire. It is obvious that the more perfect knowledge that will be obtained of the Chinese character will be useful in a thousand ways to those engaged in trade with that country, while the ancient and peculiar civilization of a people constituting probably one-fourth of the whole human family, must deeply interest the philosopher, the statesman and the Christian.

But it is not needful to go to the antipodes for subjects affording abundant scope for the most protracted and profound research. The nations of Europe and the people of our own country, linked by every tie that can bind nations together, and exerting a great and rapidly increasing influence upon each other, and, by consequence, upon the individuals of each, constitute the most interesting and instructive subjects of our proper study. In the remarks I propose making upon this theme, I shall not attempt an elaborate exposition of the characteristic traits

of the nations alluded to. Neither my time nor your patience would permit such an examination, even were I capaple, by observation, reading and reflection to undertake it. I propose, instead, to invite your attention only to some of the peculiar and salient traits which characterize a few of the leading nations, and have contributed to their greatness, their decadence and their fall, or which still continue to exercise a controlling influence over their destiny.

In an investigation of this kind, however slight, the mind instinctively reverts to the two great nations of antiquity, which, though dead, yet speak to us in their language, their literature, their institutions, and, above all, their distinctive traits of character. The history of Greece and Rome is, beyond all comparison, more interesting and instructive than that of any country of modern times, by reason that it is complete. The annals of other nations equally abound in incident—those of Spain, for instance, whose history is authentic from the time of Hamilcar, the Carthaginian, to the present day; and during this long lapse of ages, her wars and discoveries, her changing fortunes, her chivalric valor, her world-wide dominion, render her history as romantic and attractive as if it had been the brilliant, imaginative creation of the Wizard of the North. England, too, more than rivals Imperial Rome in physical power and extent of sway. She still towers in her pride of place, and Spain, though sunken and degraded, is not utterly extinct, and may yet hope for the future. But the nationality of Greece and Rome was extinguished many ages ago, and in that fact

chiefly consists the charm and value of their history. No other nations of the world, of which we have authentic record, and which have impressed their character upon succeeding ages, ever rose to such a pitch of greatness, and were then extinguished forever. The utter loss of nationality is one of the most remarkable and surprising facts in history.

Greece was admirably situated for commercial purposes —nearly in the centre of the Mediterranean sea, around whose shores was all that the ancient world knew of science, literature, the arts, written law, productive industry and commerce. As a people, the Greeks were temperate, abhorrers of gluttony and excess, delicate and refined, patient and industrious, passionately fond of the beautiful whether in nature or art, imaginative to an excess that personified every fountain, river and solemn wood, and created a mythology that in its graceful beauty still enchants the world; social, lively, inquisitive and acute, addicted to intrigue and finesse, capable of the most heroic achievements, with manifestations of intellect and creative power, surpassing all that the world has since known in almost every department of literature and art; yet double-faced, false and lying —in short, the counterpart of the Greeks of the Fanar of Constantinople— they combined in a higher degree than any other people of whom we have any account, the faults and the excellencies of all other races. So favored as they were by climate, position, superior intellectual developement, and all the arts that conduce to a nation's greatness, they

ought, one would think, to have made themselves the controlling power of the ancient world. Yet, with the exception of ALEXANDER'S triumphant foray into Asia, from which Greece derived no permanently substantial and beneficial results, the only impression she made upon the surrounding nations during the height of her power was, by sending out a few colonies to Asia Minor, Sicily and the adjoining shores of Italy.

Nearly all her heroic achievements in arms, her battles of Platea, Salamis, Thermopylæ and Marathon, which yet ring like the sound of a trumpet, her illustrious statesmen, her master pieces in philosophy, poetry, history, oratory, the drama, architecture and statuary, which still excite envy and admiration for their almost miraculous perfection, are all referable to a period of time not exceeding a century in duration. Achievements so varied, and so great, constitute a wonderful illustration of what the genius of a people can accomplish under circumstances that stimulate and favor its fullest development. Yet this people, so gloriously endowed, was broken like glass in collision with the stern and iron power of Rome. Her nationality was at once, and forever extinguished, for the Byzantine empire, that made its seat centuries after at Constantinople, was built up on a Roman foundation, having but the baser traits of Grecian character in its composition, and the modern kingdom of Greece, with a heavy Bavarian prince on the throne, bears even less the resemblance to the Greece of PERICLES and PLATO.

The sudden grandeur and fall of the antique Grecian States, have been the themes of innumerable historians and essayists, and have been used countless times to "point a moral," if not "adorn a tale." Ingenious, able and convincing have been the reasons assigned for events so surprising. The multiplicity of small independent states into which Greece was divided, with their varied and sometimes conflicting interests, prevented concert and unity of action. This cause alone suffices to account for the inability of the Greeks to make successful resistance against the Romans. They were able to repel the undisciplined heterogeneous mass of the Persian host, and under ALEXANDER with his Macedonian Phalanx, that more resembled the Roman legionary corps, than any thing peculiar to the Greeks proper, they carried the war successfully and far into the enemy's country. But they fell an easy prey to the compact, well cemented power of Rome, that, like Venice in her palmy days, was wielded by few hands, animated by decided, energetic, astute and remorseless spirits.

There was yet another cause of the ruin of the Grecian States besides those alluded to, which are the chief ones assigned by historians. This cause was the narrow exclusiveness which was a prominent and peculiar characteristic of the Greeks. Proud of their refinement and intellectual culture, and their pre-eminence in the arts, they looked down with contempt upon the surrounding nations, stigmatizing them all by the common epithet of barbarians. The foreigners who came among them were not suffered

to occupy any prominent civil or military station, and even the privileges of ordinary citizenship were rarely accorded to those not to the manor born. The city of Athens, that challenges equally with Imperial Rome the admiration of the modern world, in its proudost estate did not have more than about 20,000 citizens. Sir WILLIAM JONES's famous lines, so philosophically just, if taken merely as a definition of what constitutes the true glory of a state, are, like much other very magnificent poetry, too exalted and sublimated for every day use in this prosaic world. With a truer, more statesmanlike insight of the practicallities of life, Lord BACON long before remarked that:—"All states that are liberal of naturalization towards strangers, are fit for empire." A state, if it hopes to maintain its independence, must have strong handed citizens, and enough of them, if they are not all of the stamp described by Sir WILLIAM. It was the irreverent remark of the great FREDERICK, of Prussia, that in war GOD always favored the side that had the most artillery. The saying is characteristic, and, throwing aside its irreverent levity, if taken merely as a maxim of state, that downright physical means are essential to and will guarantee the stability and prosperity of a state, is true. The Greeks found it so when too late, and without stopping now to draw conclusions from this fact, I will call your attention to the widely different policy pursued by the Romans.

Within the last few years a world of light has been shed upon the early history of Rome, its political institutions, &c. by the careful and philosophical researches of

Niebuhr, Michelet and others, who have stirred the dry bones and animated the gaunt skeleton of antiquity, so that one can realize that the ancient Romans were flesh and blood like ourselves, influenced by the same passions and motives, and had views of public policy that are well worth attention even in this age of progress. In fact, if we study Roman history carefully by the light now set before us, we shall discover, to our surprise perhaps, that even in matters of national and governmental polity there is nothing new under the sun. The historians to whom I have alluded, have established beyond all controversy, that the Oscic, Sabine and Latin nations, which, together, constituted Republican Rome, and showed the way to universal dominion, were connected by language, and doubtless by blood, to the great family of nations, which has spread from India to England and thence to this country, and is designated by the name of Indo-Germanic. Their mythology was of a morose, stern and gloomy character; resembling in many respects, that of the races in the more northern parts of Europe, from whom the people of this country are chiefly sprung. It was not till many centuries after the foundation of the city that the Grecian mythology was fully adopted in Rome, and even then it was doubtingly regarded by the more sober portion of the people. Under the emperors any abomination was tolerated, and the monstrous gods of Egypt, and all the forms of idolatry with which Asia teemed, found their devotees. But during the time that Rome was ascending to its culminating point, and until it lost its distinctive character, by

becoming "the sink of nations," the sternness of its original faith was maintained. I mention this because the religious faith of any people is a pretty fair index of their character, always exerting a marked and controlling influence in their affairs. If time were allowed me, it would be curious to trace the many striking analogies between the religious notions of the rude founders of the Roman Empire, and the notions entertained by our own Pagan ancestors in northern and central Europe. But I must pass to the consideration of a characteristic feature in the civil polity of the Romans, which more than any thing else, contributed to their aggrandizement and universality of empire.

In speaking of the Greeks, I alluded to their exclusiveness regarding foreigners, their undisguised contempt of them, and their denial to them of the privileges of citizenship. The Roman policy was directly the reverse of this. The privileges of Roman citizenship were very great, but from the first they were carefully extended by degrees, and to such of the surrounding nations as proved themselves worthy, and whose incorporation was desirable, until nearly all the free Italians were permitted the enjoyment of the much coveted boon. It should be remarked, however, that the privileges of citizenship were accorded with great care and judgment. The Romans were not guilty of the folly of annexing whole states and nations, and making citizens at once of the alien people. They extended over such conquered territories their laws, they seized their revenues, and exercised every attribute of supreme sovereignty, but

people of alien birth were not admitted as citizens any faster than they could be assimilated, so that the process was not only entirely safe, but, like food in the corporeal system, sustained and strengthened the body politic. How highly the privilege thus won was esteemed by the recipients, can easily be imagined. The alien admitted to citizenship, regarded it as the commoner in the monarchical states of Europe does a patent of nobility—an acknowledgement of merit, and an investure of superior immunities. Even St. Paul was obviously gratified with the fact that he was a Roman citizen, and entitled thereby to claim certain special and precious privileges.

Under the influence of this policy, and so long as it was persisted in, Rome continued to gain in strength and dominion. What she won, she was able to keep, and there was no more danger, that any of the nations and territories she conquered, would revolt and attempt to throw off the yoke, than there is that the state of New York will proclaim her independence of the general government of the Union. Every foot of ground on which she planted her eagle she held. The characteristic policy of the Romans in this matter, and the success that attended it, should be studied by every statesman, and especially by those of our own country. The Romans knew that no great, prosperous state could be built up without men; but they would not, whatever the temptation, incur the hazard of being overwhelmed, or of introducing heterogeneous elements into their constituency, by sweeping admissions of large masses of people. To be citizens, those aspiring

to that dignity were required to become Romans in fact before they were in name. This wise and prudent policy was persevered in for centuries, or until the change from a republic to an imperial form of government; and it is to be noticed that that change took place very soon after the Republic had made rapid and numerous accessions to its territory by conquest, and quarrels arose among the victorious generals, each asserting, with an army flushed with triumphs to back his pretensions, his claim to rule the State. Following upon these troubles, and the establishment of imperial sway, was the change in regard to citizenship, to which I have alluded. The privilege of citizenship so jealously guarded in the better days of the republic, was prodigally lavished by the emperors, in recompense for the basest services, and conquered nations were literally born in a day. This is the period that the philosophical Gibbon took as his point of departure when writing his profound and instructive, yet most melancholy history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

I have dwelt longer on the Greeks and Romans than I had intended, but there is a moral to be drawn from the views here presented. The two people adopted opposing lines of policy in regard to the admission of other people to a participation in their citizenship. The Greeks, although never grossly aggressive, by their exclusiveness and haughty, undisguised contempt of those whom they stigmatised as barbarians, cut themselves off from sympathy in their misfortunes, and stirred up enemies among the surrounding nations. The Romans, on the other hand,

were constantly aggressive, but by their policy of cautiously admitting the conquered people to the privileges of citizenship, thereby raising them to an equality with the victors, won friends, bound to them by the strongest tie —that of a common interest. Even in times of peace, other nations sent solemn deputations to the Roman senate, praying to be admitted, in a manner not altogether unlike what has recently occurred in our own history. Human nature, and the policy that builds up and destroys nations, are pretty much the same in all ages and all countries. The nation that follows the Greek policy of exclusiveness, no matter how great or powerful it may deem itself, will find it a difficult, if not impossible task, to maintain its integrity and independence in the collisions with other nations that will inevitably take place. Even China, although separated by broad oceans from Europe and America, must relax her rigorous exclusiveness, or she will be forced to succomb to the forces that will be brought to bear upon her; and the hitherto impenetrable Japan must experience the same fate. Still more destructive to any people's nationality, will be an imitation of the error into which Imperial Rome fell, of admitting a vast, heterogeneous mass of different races, living under divers laws, customs and religions. A privilege that ought to be esteemed invaluable, by this policy is rendered so cheap and worthless as to be despised. By neglect of proper caution in the assimilating process, all identity of interest and unity of feeling are prevented, and the unwieldy mass, though imposing by its magnitude, soon falls asunder by

lack of cohesive power, and desolating wars speedily complete the ruin of the fabric that seemed so strong.

It would be easy to adduce illustrations, beside those already given, of the truth of these general remarks. France has hardly yet recovered from the disastrous effects that resulted from the revocation, by Louis XIV, about a century and a half ago, of the edict of Nantes, by which so many thousands of her most valuable population were at one blow deprived of citizenship, and driven out of the country. Spain has never recovered from the injuries she received in consequence of expelling the Moors. The little state formed by Dr. Francia in Paraguay on the Chinese, or rather Japanese model of rigid exclusiveness, though enjoying every advantage of soil and climate, never prospered. It existed, and that is about all that can be said. If it be true that history is nothing but philosophy teaching by example, then are we warned by the experience of the past, in the clearest, most convincing manner, that the nation that seeks to increase its strength to the utmost, should adopt a wisely liberal, yet cautiously guarded, policy in regard to its privileges of citizenship. Any attempt on this occasion to make a more specific application of these remarks to our own country, would involve the consideration of so many other matters, as to be obviously out of place.

It is a long leap, over the old, from the antique to the modern. But though the middle ages displayed characteristics worthy profound study — in many respects, by reason of their exhibition of the formative process of our

present civilization, more worthy of such study than any other ages in the world's history—I am now obliged to pass them by with but brief remark. With the commencement of the downfall of the Roman Empire new elements of society and national polity began to be developed. The Christian religion every where overspread Europe and under its benign influence, though but imperfectly understood, these new elements, in obedience to the laws of their affinities, began slowly to crystalize into the forms in which institutions and manners are now moulded. But in this process the original distinctive traits of the nations are by no means obliterated. They show themselves under different phases, or through media formerly unknown, but the original mental constitution still remains, and gives tone and color to the character. The few brief lines, in which Cæsar describes the ancient Gauls, are as applicable to the natives of modern France as they would be if written at the close of the last century, instead of nearly two thousand years before; and the Spaniards during the recent Peninsular War and at the seige of Saragossa, displayed precisely the same qualities that their ancesters did in resisting the Carthaginians, and at the dreadful seige of Saguntum, more than twenty centuries ago.

Nothing gives such a decided character to a people as its religious faith, and when once such faith has taken firm root, nothing is so difficult to eradicate. The modern Greeks are, even now, half pagan in a great many of their notions, and thousands of king Otho's subjects,

who never heard of the beautiful mythology of their fathers, are unconsciously imbued with its spirit. The power that the younger D'Israeli, ascribes to the old forms of faith, is strictly just; but it is unphilosophical to insist that the whole world will eventually become converts to precisely the same modes of manifesting that faith, or that one nation or race of men can influence other nations so far as to induce the adoption of their own peculiar doctrines in regard to some of the abstrusest subjects that can occupy the human mind. Of course I do not wish to be understood as denying the ultimate prevalence and cordial reception of the essential doctrines of Christianity. Reason and revelation alike forbid such a denial. What I mean is, that in embracing these doctrines the nations of Europe — and the same will doubtless prove true of other nations — have all unconsciously been so influenced by old deeply rooted notions that, although agreeing in essential particulars, they yet exhibit a marked, characteristic diversity of sentiment. How widely different, for instance, is the Christianity of the Protestant Free Church of Scotland from that of Catholic Portugal. This is an extreme illustration, I will grant; but the difference in the intellectual culture of the people of the two countries will not account for their religious diversity. Portugal may be brought to a purer religious faith and practice, but the religious *sentiment* of her people will never conform to that of Scotland. The two people come of different races and inherit different notions —

notions which have in some things given a coloring to the faith they profess. The influence of these old hereditary notions is a very curious and inviting subject of investigation, if one had leisure to pursue it. Their stern old mythology influenced the Romans long after the general adoption of the Greek forms; and it can hardly be doubted that in a thousand ways our feelings and superstitions, notwithstanding all the light shed by science and Christianity, are yet tinged by the fancies that filled the souls of our Norse or Teutonic ancestors.

Cast your eyes over the map of Europe. That continent has for centuries enjoyed the highest intellectual culture of any portion of the world. It is all civilized, for the most part pre-eminently so. Seats of learning every where abound, the facilities of inter-communication are very great. War and peace have alike contributed to make its inhabitants well acquainted with each other, commercial intercourse is no where so active. Nearly all of it lies within the temperate zone. In such a region, if in any of equal extent, notwithstanding the multiplicity of States into which it is divided, we might expect that under the combined action of all the influences mentioned, there would, in process of time, be something like homogeneousness among the various nations. Yet how distinct they are in their characteristics, and what a broad line of demarkation there is between the nations of Northern and Southern Europe. This difference of character is

not the result of different institutions, potential as they are in modifying the character of a people, for in the main their institutions are and have been the same. There must be radical differences in the mental constitutions of the nations of Europe to cause the wonderful and sharply defined diversity that exists. The kindly influences of civilization and superior mental culture have softened the rigid features that were so prominent when the nations were first known in authentic history. But though in the attrition of ages many salient points have been rubbed down, enough yet remains to show their existence, and the Teutones and Cimbri scarcely differed more from the Romans in the time of Caius Marius, than do the Saxons and Bavarians from the Italians of the present day. The employments of men living in nearly the same climate must be pretty much alike so long as man is doomed to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; but so far as the necessities of the case will allow, the habits of thought, the studies and manners of the people of Northern and Southern Europe run in different channels. All are nominally Christians, yet in the profession of a common faith, embracing substantially the same articles, they cannot agree in many particulars. The old hereditary instinct — if that term may be allowed — still prevails and controls. The mythology of the pagan nations of the North was marked by stern severity. It recognized few idols or visible images. The few gods it contained were the personifications of

such attributes and physical phenomena as were calculated to strongly impress the mind of a thoughtful and rather melancholy people, accustomed to repress much outward manitestations of ordinary passions; and living in a country more remarkable for sombre, savage grandeur than for beauty. The religious ideas of such a people would naturally be simple, severe and monotonous.

Southern Europe, reposing under a bright sunny sky, abounding in fruits and flowers, offering on every side the most varied and beautiful landscapes, would naturally promote a more genial, joyous temperament. It invited social intercourse, prompted a love of the beautiful, generated a passionate fondness for the sensuous objects that afforded such delight, and quickened into fullest life the poetical, imaginative tendencies of its people. These distinctive traits still characterize the nations and dwellers of the two regions. Northern Europe has, for the most part, embraced the Protestant faith in some of its forms, while the South still more generally clings to the old Catholic forms. Yet, at the time of the reformation, the Catholic religion was, apparently, as firmly rooted in the North as in the South. In Scotland, particularly, it seemed to have as strong a hold as in Italy. Looking only to natural causes and the mental constitution of the people for a solution of the phenomenon, what other reason can be offered for the fact that Scotland embraced Protestanism with so much zeal immediately it was preached, while Italy,—where, contrary to the generally received belief, it was also preached with great fervor and ability—clung so closely to the ancient

faith, except on the supposition of a radical difference between the two people, predisposing them to such diverse courses of sentiment? Ireland, as is well known, still remains Catholic. The Irish are Celts, a race that has its origin in the South, and they still continue to show in their impetuous, imaginative temperament and rapid play of passions, their ancestral spirit.

The causes producing such marked results in matters of religious faith, have been not less efficient in their politico-economical consequences. France, one of the foremost powers of the world, holds an intermediate position between the North and the South, and happily blends the characteristics of both in its own distinctive traits. But for a large, and, it may be said the greater, portion of its energy and vigor, it is indebted to the Franks and Normans, people of Northern extraction. It was an infusion of Northern blood that gave strength and ability to Austria, and has enabled her to subdue the southern provinces of her dominions on the Danube, and lord it over so fair a portion of Italy. But in conquering these provinces, she committed the fatal mistake of neglecting to assimilate their people with her own. The races were permitted to remain distinct, and in the recent dismemberment of the Austrian Empire, as rapid and as violent as if it had been accomplished by some irresistible centrifugal force, can be seen the disastrous result of such a policy. The wealth, the commercial enterprise, the intellectual culture and the physical power, all, in short, that gives Europe its supremacy in the affairs of the world, will, with the exceptions

mentioned, be found almost exclusively in the Northern portion.

Chief among the Northern nations, is that of Great Britain. The several states comprehended under the general term of Germany, have a greater population and are able to bring more armed men into the field; but in wealth, in the almost unlimited extent of its war and commercial marine, in its manufacturing and various industrial resources, Great Britain surpasses any other portion in Europe. Many sagacious observers think the colossal fabric of her greatness has attained its utmost growth. It may well be doubted whether she will be able to maintain her pre-eminent position among the surrounding nations. She is forced to sustain burdens which would crush any other nation, and has, besides, serious political troubles growing out of a forced, unnatural, and, on one side repulsive, union with a people whom she has not assimilated with her own, and, perhaps, never can. Many of the other powers of Europe, less embarrassed in similar respects, are developing their resources in a greater ratio than Great Britain, and although she may, in spite of all apparently adverse circumstances, continue to increase, the more rapid growth of other nations, will reduce her relative importance. The common sense of any enlightened country is now so quick to apprehend the true sources of evils that may press upon it, and public opinion, especially in Great Britain, is so potential, and now more so than ever, in enforcing the adoption of measures to remedy such evils, that we put no faith whatever in

predictions that she will at some future day, like other famous empires, exist only in history or romantic legend.

Before this audience, it would be a work of supererogation to undertake a portraiture of the leading characteristics of the British people. They are as familiar as household words. It may be permitted, however, to allude to some facts in the constitution of that people. They are less homogeneous than the people of any other nation in Europe. They call themselves Anglo Saxons, but why, it would puzzle an Englishman to tell. The Angles from whom the country takes its name, as the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci gave his name to the continent to which Columbus led the way, were but one of the septs or tribes into which Britain was divided and by no means the most powerful. The Picts in the North and the Druidical Britons of Wales were very different races of people. In short, the island, at the time Cæsar visited it, was made up of a more heterogeneous population than that which was collected within the walls of Rome under its early kings. The Romans overran it, and held it for several centuries, under the Emperors, thereby infusing into the native population a large strain of their own blood. The Saxons and the Danes succeeded the Romans as conquerors and colonists, causing a still greater mixture of races, and finally the Normans, under William the Conqueror and his successors, effected the complete subjugation of the island, and have, for the most part, constituted the ruling race ever since.

It is absurd to call a people so made up of mixed races

Anglo Saxon, or any thing else but English. In process of time they have become a distinct, well characterized race, just as we see a distinct breed of animals produced by skillful crossing. Successive conquests, at sufficiently long intervals to allow complete intermixture and assimilation of the opposing races, have produced in England, effects analogous to those produced by the Roman policy of making citizens of her allies and some of the conquered nations. Whether or not England ever perpetrated a greater crime, she certainly never made a greater blunder than in the conquest and subsequent treatment of Ireland. I have no wish to discuss or meddle with the question of Irish politics, and only allude to the connection between the sister islands, because it strikingly illustrates some of my general remarks. The Irish, as before mentioned, are a people of Celtic origin, and in many of their most prominent characteristics are as directly opposed to the English as can well be imagined. The people of Ireland, too, at the time the conquest was undertaken by the English, were more purely and intensely homogeneous than any other nation in Europe. The conquest after immense exertion was at last effected; but what was the treatment of the vanquished? The record can easily be found. I would merely call attention to the fact that the English, instead of attempting to assimilate the conquered people to themselves, passed laws of a most stringent and penal character, to prevent such a result, forbidding the two races to intermarry, and otherwise keeping up an eternal bar of separation. Subsequently, matters were not much

mending by the quasi independence that was allowed Ireland, which independence was at last extinguished by the union half a century ago. Had this union been effected in the time of ELIZABETH, or had not a channel of the ocean intervened between the two countries, and thus prevented free access of the one to the other, the two races might, possibly, have mingled into one. But each has preserved through centuries its distinctness of religious faith and national character, and both are now reaping the bitter fruits of the unhappy policy that has prevailed. The lesson to be drawn from this—unless all history be a lie and all experience a cheat—is, that nothing is more dangerous to a nation's weal than to attempt to unite, without thorough incorporation and assimilatian, two races differing in their language, customs, religion and national characteristics. Thus far the effort never has succeeded, and it probably never will. Next to the best thing of giving Poland an independent existence as one of the powers of Europe, has been the utter extinction of her nationality by the Emperor NICHOLAS of Russia. Unhappy Poland may become prosperous as an integral part of the Russian Empire, and the commingling of the people that will ensue. But while held merely as a conquered dependency, with a bar between the purely Sclavonion and mixed Russian races, no good result to either could follow.

In the cases of intermixture of people to which I have alluded, it should be remarked that the primal stock has been improved by the additions made to it. The Romans

at least, were not injured by the incorporation of inferior races. The ancient Gauls were improved by the irruptions of the Franks and Normans, and Great Britain, more than any country of Europe, has profited by the changes thus wrought. The original stock was respectable, according to the accounts which Cæsar, Tacitus and other ancient writers have given us. The Saxons, Danes and Normans, improved upon that and each other. It would swell the limits of this address too much, if allusions were made with particularity of detail, to the prominent traits in the character and polity of the many other nations of Europe. Keeping in view the leading idea I have endeavored to present, it may be said, in brief, that those nations have prospered least, that have allowed the least mixture with other people, as Spain — whose only great mixture has been with the Goths — and Portugal, and that have been overwhelmed by a mixture of all races, as Italy. Vandals, Huns, Goths, Lombards and others have overrun the whole or parts of Italy, each leaving portions of their hordes, to say nothing of the corruption of the original stock by the mixture of the baser sort of the population of the Levant and the islands and shores of the Mediterranean. Efforts to rouse something like nationality of feeling, have been repeatedly made, and as often without success.

Whether any better fate will attend the effort recently made, remains to be seen. The struggle has been commenced under better auspices than preceding ones. The political condition of Europe is favorable to the enterprise, but I am strongly inclined to doubt whether the

nationality of Italy can be re-established. CHARLES ALBERT of Sardinia, may succeed in detaching Lombardy from Austria, but if that shall be effected, and Lombardy be brought under his rule, the old Italian nation will not be re-constituted. There is both truth and sarcasm in the remark said to have been made by Prince METTERNICH, in reference to the difficulties between Austria and the Pope, that "Italy is but a geographical term." There is no Italian nation, and until the discordant elements in the composition of the people that inhabit the Italian peninsula, are fused into a consistent mass by natural affinities, it is in vain to hope for a revival of Italian nationality

It is not probable that the distinctive traits which characterize the various nations of Europe, will be altogether obliterated for many centuries to come, if ever; but their more salient points will be reduced toward a common level hereafter more rapidly than they have been heretofore. Many causes are conspiring to produce this result, prominent among which, may be mentioned the great extension of manufacturing establishments — withdrawing from the comparatively isolated pursuits of agriculture large masses of the population, and concentrating them in certain localities where they can mutually act upon each other — and the vastly increased facilities of intercommunication resulting from the use of steam vessels and railroads. Nothing wakes up the dozing faculties of a primitive people, and gives them new ideas of progress like the shrill scream of the steam whistle. Institutions may do much for the improvement of a people's condition.

They are essential to its greatest prosperity. But, if the chief good, and however well adapted they may be to a nation's requirements, they are not the only good, and will not alone suffice. All will admit the indispensableness of good roads, canals, railroads and the like, in developing the merely physical resources of a country; but their agency is not confined to affording easy means of transporting persons and various marketable products from one point to another. They do all this, and in addition, or coincident with this, they exert a powerful moral influence in modifying and harmonizing the national character of the people where they exist. Especially is every physical agent of progress needed in a country like ours, whose form of government and the principles on which it rests, require a large degree of intelligence and unity of feeling among its population; but whose extended territory, offering every variety of soil and climate, invites the formation of isolated or scattering communities but slightly bound together. Our grand chain of lakes, and the broad, long-sweeping rivers that so lavishly penetrate our favored land, have hitherto obviated in a measure the evil effects that would otherwise have resulted from scattering a population, originally so heterogeneous as ours, over so wide a surface. These natural facilities have been greatly increased by the artificial constructions alluded to without whose agency now it is not too much to say this union would speedily break asunder. As it is, they are rapidly fusing us into one people, with distinctive traits

of national character, as well defined as those of the English.

No nation has ever been built up of such various materials as ours, and in what precise form from these diverse elements our clearly recognized national character will be evolved, is yet a fair subject for speculation. What we already know, however, warrants a tolerably safe estimate. The parent stock of the American people, is the English, in its best estate, as improved by successive crossing of races. Grafted upon this, or rather mingling with it, is a large infusion of Irish, Low Dutch, French, Spanish and Swedish blood, to say nothing of the slight yet considerable accessions from other nations of Europe. Of late years, great numbers have come among us from Switzerland, Prussia the provinces along the Rhine, and Norway, while the stream from the British Islands has continued to flow in undiminished volume. This large immigration has given rise to much thought and discussion, and in some localities has constituted an element in our partizan politics. On its political bearing I have now nothing to say. Whether for good or for ill, immigrants from all countries have come, and will continue to come to this country. The scope of my remarks confines me to an estimate of the effects upon the national character. Thus far we have borne the pressure pretty well. Notwithstanding the immense accessions we have received from foreign countries, including the French and Spanish population of Louisiana and Florida, our population is at this moment

more homogeneous, more purely American, if the term is applicable, than it was in the time of the revolution.

The power of assimilation that this country possesses surpasses that of any other in the world's history. This is to be attributed in a great degree to the character of our institutions which allow and invite, under specific restrictions, all who come to our shores to take part in the government, and to the fact that a broad ocean intervenes between this country and Europe, thereby not only preventing our being overwhelmed by an irruption of other nations, but at the same time, by the obstacle it interposes to a return, making those of foreign birth, who are settled among us, feel that they have taken an irrevocable step, that their lot is cast with us, and that they must govern themselves accordingly. The children of such mingle with the children of those whose ancestors came here one or two hundred years ago. They attend the same schools, and their habits of thought are formed under the same institutions. Whether a longer or shorter term of naturalization shall be prescribed for the adults of foreign birth that come to this country, may be a question. But the fact is undeniable that the American people, made up as they are from such various sources, do display a vigor, an energy and executive power in whatever they undertake, whether in peace or war, not surpassed, and in some respects not equalled, by any other nation of which we have record. What they have already achieved against obstacles that might well appal stout, determined hearts, is their highest eulogy, and affords a glorious presage for the

future. The great danger to be apprehended is, that a people so abounding in enterprise and energetic action may, in their pursuit of the material, lose sight of the spiritual. But even in this regard, I would cherish a sanguine and hopeful spirit. The great West, that in its growth and developement, its restless enterprise and the heterogeneous elements that make up its population, may be taken as a somewhat exaggerated type of the whole country, will warrant the trust that throughout the land, as we have witnessed there, will grow up among our people, without any detraction from their high hope, self-reliance and untiring energy, a more perfect civilization, more extended intellectual culture and a purer moral developement.

Thus far I have confined myself to an examination of some of the causes which contribute to, or essentially affect the progress of nations in their developement as organized states. But in addressing this audience on an occasion like this, I should not forbear making some allusions to the agencies that influence the intellectual developement of mankind. We mourn over the ravages of red-handed war, its enormous destruction of life and property, the widows and orphans it makes, its demoralizing effects, and the lasting burdens it imposes even upon the nation that exults in its so-called glorious triumphs. Above all other wars we deplore and deprecate those intestine revolutionary wars that rend nations asunder, and array those that should be brothers in deadly strife against each other. Especially do those who cultivate the

humanities—in the literal as well as scholastic sense of that term—deprecate such contests as most unfavorable to the moral and intellectual culture of man. Letters as well as laws are too often silent in the clang of arms. But the observant student of history must admit that the periods in which the human mind has made the most marked and decided progress in all that ennobles and dignifies it, have been those immediately succeeding great and violent civil convulsions, so commonly lamented as most injurious to such progress. I need not remind the scholar that the Augustan age, when the Roman mind displayed its greatest power, splendor and magnificence, and when were achieved the master pieces of oratory, poetry and philosophy that still command our wondering admiration, was immediately preceded by an era of bloody civil convulsions, beginning with SYLLA, the man-slayer, and ending with the slaughter at Philippi, scarcely paralleled in the world's history.

Immediately consequent upon the Crusades, when all Europe seemed converted into a vast camp, was the revival of learning, and the crystallization of modern civilization into the forms we now see. The impulse then given was greatly accelerated by the discovery of this continent, soon after, that stimulated the active adventurous minds into what then seemed pursuits ill adapted to promote a spirit of intellectual progress. But all these wars and commotions, this rushing off in quest of something, men hardly knew what, but which, vague and undefinable as it was, strongly excited the imagination,

had the effect of freeing the mind from conventional restraints, starting it in new and independent channels of thought, and by so doing produced the great results that have so much benefitted the world. The Protestant reformation is an illustration precisely in point. It aroused the dormant faculties of men, gave them freedom and independence of action, prompted to action, and in that way produced just the same results that would have been effected by great civil and political convulsions, with which, indeed, it was closely allied, if it did not positively originate them. The periods in which the greatest advances have been made by England and France, have been during the reigns of Queen ANNE and LOUIS XIV, and the last fifty years.

In the reign of Queen ANNE may be said to have been consummated that great revolution that was begun under CHARLES I, and continued with various fortune under CROMWELL and the two STUARTS, until achieved under WILLIAM III. During the long minority of LOUIS XIV, France was torn with the contending factions and civil wars of the League and the Fronde, and, although the forms of monarchy were at no time abolished, yet the license of thought and action was as great as in England. The fruits of the seed thus sown, ripened in England under ANNE and in France under LOUIS, whose eras, in the brilliancy and prodigality of intellect they displayed, are universally characterized as the true classical and Augustan ages of the two countries. Still more striking and wonderful manifestations of progress have followed the old French Revolu-

tion. I have no wish to disguise or palliate the enormous crimes and atrocities, the recollection of which causes a thrill of horror at the mention of that event; but never in the annals of the human race has it made greater progress in the true principles of government, in science and the arts, never in modern times have there been sublimer examples of christian faith and all the practices it inculcates, and never has the human mind been more intensely employed than during the fifty years that have succeeded the French Revolution.

The historical illustrations I have resorted to are not mere coincidences. They hold to each other the relation of cause and effect. We would not foster a spirit of war and revolution, any more than we would if we could obscure the fair face of nature by the clouds bearing the red lightning, or destroy the labors of the husbandman by the resistless tornado. But as, in the natural world, when the clouds rise dark and portentous, when every thing is hushed in mute apprehension of some impending evil, and our eyes are blinded and ears stunned by the intolerable glare and volleying crash of heaven's artillery, we trust soon again to see the bright sun, and all nature rejoicing in a purer, more invigorating atmosphere, so, too, in times of war and great civil commotions, would we cherish the hope that, ominous and threatening as they may appear, they are but the means of working out an exceedingly great good. In a time like the present, I hope the presentation of ideas like these will not be deemed inappropriate. Our own beloved country is passing through a crisis in its

history, and dark clouds loom up in the horizon. The future of Europe, in whose fortunes we must take so deep an interest, is full of doubt; but it is the part of the true, bold mind never to despond. All history teaches us to hope for the best, that soon the clouds and darkness that now obscure our vision, will be dissipated by the dawning of another and more glorious day, enabling us to pursue our progress onward and upward beyond any thing hitherto known. To be faint-hearted in this belief, is to prove false to the memory of our fathers and the principles they labored to establish.

Those principles and the government based upon them, free us from all conventional restraints of thought. What other nations can only achieve through the blood and fire of a revolution, namely, a recognition of juster principles of government, and a state of things favorable to the fullest development of human intellect, has already been won for us, and in the proud motto of our noble State, EXCELSIOR, HIGHER, should each of us find his incentive to action. Then would our state and nation realize the idea embodied in the magnificent lines of Sir WILLIAM JONES. I am no believer in a blind destiny, of which we have heard so much of late. A wise Providence doubtless overrules all the affairs of this world, but, under GOD, nations as well as individuals hold their fate or destiny in their own hands; and nations, whatever may be said of individuals, expiate their errors in this world. We have started under fairer auspices than ever graced the rise of any other people. The physical features of

our country were cast in Nature's grandest mould, as if the land were intended for the dwelling-place of a great nation. The original stock of settlers, combining energy, untiring industry, executive power, high moral principal and the habit of command, was the best of Europe, and here had full scope for the fullest exercise and development of its qualities. The accessions to it have been made no faster than they could be thoroughly incorporated with it, and have in no wise impared its original vigor. They have rather tended to revive here, under different forms of society and civilization, and with different objects whereupon to expend itself, the old Norman spirit, which for centuries was the vivifying influence of European life. Would that all in this happy land were justly sensible of the blessings that have been so prodigally showered upon them, and would to the right and themselves prove true. Then in a higher, nobler spirit than that which animated the old Romans — to whom in so many respects, the formation of our people bears so great a resemblance — we, too, might make it our proudest boast that we are citizens of the Great Republic.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 029 911 035 7

LD2101
H.241 A3
1898

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 029 911 035

Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5